

WINNING COMMUNICATION SKILLS



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Introduction

Communication is at the heart of everything we do; it is impossible not to communicate. We are communicating even when we are not actually talking. Non-verbal communication such as body posture, gestures and facial expressions can be more powerful and more genuine than actual words spoken. Communication is a two way process that needs good listening and presenting skills.

Did you know:

- We hear half of what is said;
- We listen to half of that;
- We understand half of that;
- We believe half of that and
- We remember half of that

This means people may only remember less than four per cent of what is actually said. Too often we are good talkers but poor listeners, and, consequently, both the message sent out and the message received may be incomplete, inaccurate,

inconsistent or misunderstood. Often we express ideas, instructions and feelings less clearly than we think and rarely check that our meaning has been understood.

Reasons for Communication

We communicate for 4 basic reasons:

1. To Build Relationships
2. To express Ideas/ thoughts/feelings
3. To exchange Information
4. To persuade/inspire/motivate others

Types of Communication

Communication can be verbal, non-verbal or written.

Common types of verbal communication include:

- Telephone conversations or answer phone messages
- Face to face conversations between two people
- Small, informal group discussions
- Formal committee meetings
- Large open meetings (e.g. annual general meeting)
- Speeches, lectures, seminars or presentations
- Video, DVD or filmed presentations

Non Verbal Communication would imply body posture, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, body language etc.

Common Types of Written communication include:

- Informal notes
- Internal memos
- Letters (typed or hand written)
- Short reports
- Formal reports
- Newsletters
- Posters or other messages on notice boards
- Leaflets, fliers or hand outs
- Emails
- Press releases

Effective Communication

'As soon as you move one step up from the bottom, your effectiveness depends on your ability to reach others through the written or spoken word.' (*Peter Drucker*)

The basic ingredients needed for effective communication are:

- Expression;
- Comprehension; and
- Listening

Effective Communication leads to harnessing of Winning Communication skills.

Winning

To win means to be victorious i.e. being marked by a favorable outcome. Winning is to having succeeded. The ability to achieve win/win outcomes is associated with the abundance mentality.

'This abundance mentality flows out of deep sense of personal worth and security. It results in sharing recognition, profitability, and responsibility. Most people are scripted in the scarcity mentality. They see life as a finite pie: if someone gets a big piece of pie, it means that there is less for everybody else. People with a scarcity mentality have a hard time sharing recognition, credit, power or profit.' *Stephen R Covey*

Communication

Communication can be described as the imparting or interchange of thoughts opinions or information by speech, writing or signs. It is a technique for expressing ideas effectively; a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.

Skill

Skill is practical ability, cleverness and expertness. Therefore to be skillful in something would imply as having required knowledge united with readiness and masterly expertise in that subject.

Reasons for Ineffective Communication - Communication Gaps

Probably the main barrier to giving a powerful presentation and developing winning communication skills is confidence.

Before you can devise strategies to express your self, you need to understand the causes of ineffective communication, some of which are as follows:

1. Vocabulary Failure
2. Talking too much
3. Not Listening Carefully
4. Too much emphasis on delivery rather than content
5. Anger at interruptions/ distractions

How to develop Good Communication Skills

1. Connect with the Audience - The number one rule of good communication: keep your audience in mind! Try to predict what they are thinking/feeling and how you can communicate in a way that will help you reach your goals.

2. Be Clear and Concise - Clarity is the key. The words employed should be such as to convey to the reader/listener the meaning of the communicator. The Aim is to communicate unambiguously and clearly.

3. Listen Actively - Active listening is listening with a purpose. Using active listening skills can help to minimize or avoid unnecessary conflict. It can bring clarity and understanding to conversations and interactions with other people. To work, the listener focuses on the words and the feelings of the speaker for understanding. Active listening happens when the listener hears the various messages being sent, understands their meaning, and then verifies the meaning by offering feedback.

Characteristics of an active listener:

- Spends more time listening than talking
- Let's the speaker finish his or her own sentences
- Let's the other person finish speaking before responding
- Allows the other person to speak and does not dominate the conversation
- Aware of own biases
- Asks open-ended questions
- Focuses on what is being said and not what one's response will be to the speaker

4. Be Easily Understood - Use simple words. Use words or phrases, which you could use naturally in conversation. Exceptions are technical terms and abbreviations, which your reader will understand.

5. Eye Contact - This helps to regulate the flow of communication. It signals interest in others and increases the speaker's credibility. People who make eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth, and credibility. Eye contact can also help signal that you are coming to an end and the other person can speak. Please be aware that in some cultures, extended eye contact can be considered a sign of disrespect. Therefore it is important to understand the person who you are talking to.

6. Facial Expressions - Smiling is a powerful cue that transmits happiness, friendliness, warmth and liking. By smiling, people will be more comfortable around you and more willing to listen.

7. Gestures - Without proper hand gestures, you may be perceived as boring or stiff. If you gesture too much, people may find it distracting from your message. Find a good balance and people will find you an entertaining and captivating speaker.

8. Body Language - You communicate numerous messages by the way you talk and move. Standing erect and leaning forward communicates that you are listening or that you are approachable. Face the person with whom you are speaking. If you are writing or working on something else, the person is going to feel like a nuisance. Folded arms may indicate that you are closed off so try to keep your body open by not folding arms or legs.

9. Proximity - Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance for interaction with others. Look for cues of discomfort from others to check that you are not invading personal space.

10. Vocal Elements - Speaking can signal nonverbal communication when you include such vocal elements as tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflection. Pay attention to these parts of your speech because they may belie what you are saying. From your voice people can tell if you are angry, afraid, nervous or many other emotions. Don't lie about how you are feeling; people will be able to tell from your voice.

11. Be Knowledgeable about your Subject - Without this basic element all what you have communicated is insignificant. Knowledge of the subject you are communicating on is essential.

12. Using Humor - Humor has a great effect and brings out a point like nothing else.

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." (Victor Borge). This age old proverb emphasise the importance of humor in our life. What better tool to communicate than Humor itself. If you can get a person to smile with you, half your job of communicating your ideas to him is already done. Once a little humor is injected, the point is easier to make and the message is better understood, and the audience will pay closer attention to details or points you want to get across.

However, Humor in Communication isn't always a Laughing matter. You have to be careful that it is relevant to the context of your communication.

13. Be Relaxed and Confident - Confidence is a key determining factor of effective communication. Nobody is interested in a subject of which the author/speaker himself is not confident.

Win/Win Communication

Win/Win communication is an effective form of communicating where everyone involved in the process works cooperatively toward a goal that enables two or more people or groups to achieve their desired outcomes.

In order to achieve win-win communication results, you must first be willing to act upon the highest intentions in yourself, set aside any "attitudes" that may undermine positive results, and resist your human urge to be right, look good, or teach a lesson. This form of communication is about everyone being able to win. It is not about "getting" the other person or proving that you are right and others are wrong. It is about cooperation.

Win-win communication requires an adjustment in attitude and self-examination of biases and prejudices. It is not easy, but remember someone has to start the process of communicating effectively and it might as well be you.

Developing win/win attitudes

- Come from a win-win attitude where your number one priority is respect, cooperation, and the idea that everyone can win.
- Be clear on what you want. Take responsibility for your own happiness and well being. Be prepared to take a stand for yourself. Expect that this may be difficult and might bring about some big changes in your life.

- Begin your communication by stating intention and ask if your listener has the same intention. Clearly articulate that you want to work with the other person so that both of you can still achieve your goals. This does not necessarily mean you give everything up.
- Express all you communicate in a positive manner.
- Allow the other person to have their “say” first. This will make them feel like you want to listen to them and not just set up your own soapbox from which to speak.
- Do not disagree when your co-communicator is having their “say.” Just listen.
- Actively listen during and after they have had their “say.” Repeat to them the essence of what they have said. Ask if your perception is correct.
- Be aware of good timing. Be patient. Know you will have your “say” when the time is right. Everything you have done up to this point will help prepare the other person to be open to new possibilities. You are modeling to them the win/win strategy. By giving them an opportunity to speak, they will afford you the same opportunity.
- State what you want. Be specific. State your boundaries. Be willing to enforce them.

Skills for developing win/win attitudes

- Congruence - Verbal and nonverbal communication must match. What you think and feel must match with what you say. If they do not, people will see right through you.
- Empathy - “The capacity and willingness to understand the inner experience of another person.” This is an active attempt to truly understand how the other person does feel in response to his or her circumstances.
- Acceptance - This is in reference to an unconditional positive regard for another person. You do not have to agree with the person but accept that the person has a different viewpoint but is still a good person.

Interpersonal professionals

As society develops and becomes more complex, there has evolved the need for a greater number of “interpersonal professionals” who spend a large part of their working lives in face-to-face interaction with others.

Historically, the training of many of these professionals focused almost entirely upon the acquisition of specialized knowledge. More recently however, the centrality of interpersonal communication in their work has been recognized.

Competence in most types of profession involves the effective implementation of 3 main types of skills:

1. Cognitive Skills: which refer to the knowledge base of the profession, that which characterizes it and sets it apart from others
2. Technical/ Manipulative Skills: which are inherent within a profession
3. Social / Communication Skills: that is the ability of the individual to interact effectively with others in the professional context

Acquiring winning Communication Skills

'If you're like most successful executives, you're already a good communicator. But when you have to make one of those gut-wrenching, high anxiety presentations to sell a new idea or recommend a high-ticket product or service, persuasion skills aren't always enough. You have to come across as a confident credible professional who can get the job done.' *Ray Anthony*

Communication is not an easy task. Talking is easy; communication, which means an exchange or communion with another, requires greater skill. An exchange that is a communion demands that we listen and speak skillfully, not just talk mindlessly.

Dynamic presentation and communication skills can empower people to achieve their full potential and achieve their dreams. Dynamic speaking and presenting is not limited to 'born' speaker and talented 'naturals', there are known methods and skills that can be learnt. There are probably no other skills that can increase your effectiveness than being able to present yourself, your organization and your ideas with confidence, clarity and persuasiveness.

Good communication skills enable you to take the terror out of your talk, learn the art to eliminate the anxiety, fear and embarrassment that many people associate with giving talks, speeches and presentations. All professionals should strive for better results through more effective presentation and communication skills.

About the Author

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Mr. Rajkumar S Adukia is an eminent business consultant, academician, writer, and speaker. A senior partner of Adukia & Associates he has authored more than 34 books on a wide range of subjects. His books on IFRS namely, "Encyclopedia on IFRS (3000 pages) and The Handbook on IFRS (1000 pages) has served number of professionals who are on the lookout for a practical guidance on IFRS. The book on "Professional Opportunities for Chartered Accountants" is a handy tool and ready referencer to all Chartered Accountants.

In addition to being a Chartered Accountant, Company Secretary, Cost Accountant, MBA, Dip IFR (UK), Mr. Adukia also holds a Degree in Law and Diploma in Labor Laws. He has been involved in the activities of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) since 1984 as a convenor of Kalbadevi CPE study circle. He was the Chairman of the Western Region of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India in 1997 and has been actively involved in various committees of ICAI. He became a member of the Central Council in 1998 and ever since he has worked tirelessly towards knowledge sharing, professional development and enhancing professional opportunities for members. He is a regular contributor to the various committees of the ICAI. He is currently the Chairman of Committee for Members in Industry and Internal Audit Standard Board of ICAI.

Mr. Adukia is a rank holder from Bombay University. He did his graduation from Sydenham College of Commerce & Economics. He received a Gold Medal for highest marks in Accountancy & Auditing in the Examination. He passed the Chartered Accountancy with 1st Rank in Inter CA & 6th Rank in Final CA, and 3rd Rank in Final Cost Accountancy Course in 1983. He started his practice as a Chartered Accountant on 1st July 1983, in the three decades following which he left no stone unturned, be it academic expertise or professional development. His level of knowledge, source of information, professional expertise spread across a wide range of subjects has made him a strong and sought after professional in every form of professional assignment. He has been coordinating with various professional institutions, associations' universities, University Grants Commission and other educational institutions. Besides

he has actively participated with accountability and standards-setting organizations in India and at the international level. He was a member of J.J. Irani committee which drafted Companies Bill 2008. He is also member of Secretarial Standards Board of ICSI. He represented ASSOCHAM as member of Cost Accounting Standards Board of ICWAI. He was a member of working group of Competition Commission of India, National Housing Bank, NABARD, RBI, CBI etc.

He has served on the Board of Directors in the capacity of independent director at BOI Asset management Co. Ltd, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited and SBI Mutual Funds Management Pvt Ltd. He was also a member of the London Fraud Investigation Team. Mr. Rajkumar Adukia specializes in IFRS, Enterprise Risk Management, Internal Audit, Business Advisory and Planning, Commercial Law Compliance, XBRL, Labor Laws, Real Estate, Foreign Exchange Management, Insurance, Project Work, Carbon Credit, Taxation and Trusts. His clientele include large corporations, owner-managed companies, small manufacturers, service businesses, property management and construction, exporters and importers, and professionals. He has undertaken specific assignments on fraud investigation and reporting in the corporate sector and has developed background material on the same.

Based on his rich experience, he has written numerous articles on critical aspects of finance-accounting, auditing, taxation, valuation, public finance. His authoritative articles appear regularly in financial papers like Business India, Financial Express, Economic Times and other professional / business magazines. He has authored several accounting and auditing manuals. He has authored books on vast range of topics including IFRS, Internal Audit, Bank Audit, Green Audit, SEZ, CARO, PMLA, Antidumping, Income Tax Search, Survey and Seizure, Real Estate etc. His books are known for their practicality and for their proactive approaches to meeting practice needs.

Mr. Rajkumar is a frequent speaker on trade and finance at seminars and conferences organized by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, various Chambers of Commerce, Income Tax Offices and other Professional Associations. He has also lectured at the S.P. Jain Institute of Management, Intensive Coaching Classes for Inter & Final CA students and Direct Taxes Regional Training Institute of CBDT. He also develops and delivers short courses, seminars and workshops on changes and opportunities in trade and finance. He has extensive experience as a speaker, moderator and panelist at workshops and conferences held for both students and professionals both nationally and internationally.. Mr. Adukia has delivered lectures abroad at forums of International Federation of Accountants and has travelled across countries for professional work.

Professional Association: *Mr. Rajkumar S Adukia with his well chartered approach towards professional assignments has explored every possible opportunity in the fields of business and profession. Interested professionals are welcome to share their thoughts in this regard.*